

## Notes from Standing Rock, November 19, 2016

### Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am back at home from Standing Rock. 3,200 miles, many new friends, eyes wide open and still trying to process everything. It was a profoundly moving but also disturbing experience. Here are notes on what I've learned; some is story and some is advice. Change is happening each day, so this may become quickly dated. Please feel free to share it wherever you think it may do some good, especially with people who are going there.

#### **If you go:**

Understand that you are entering a war zone, in which electronic, physical, psychological, and sadly, as of last week, chemical warfare is being waged against American citizens. This is not an exaggeration. Prepare yourself emotionally as well as physically.

Be aware that aggressive military tactics and a blind eye by police to corporate bullying are **intended to intimidate people into not coming, and to isolate Standing Rock.**

Be prepared to be inspired by the courage, joy and determination of these people. Know that they are called water protectors, not protestors. Use the proper title, because framing is important. The oil pipeline company is calling them "paid protestors," but there's not enough money to get everyone through a 35 below Dakota winter, let alone pay anyone.

Be prepared for awe, at seeing that more than 300 indigenous nations from around the world are represented here, and that the world is watching. Be prepared to be moved to tears when you participate in the Water Ceremony, and in other things. Be prepared to sing, and you will learn to sing in Lakota.

Be prepared to be welcomed into a real community that while emphasizing indigenous culture, makes everyone feel wanted and needed. If you are white, be prepared to keep much quieter at meetings than you normally might, so that you can listen and learn. We need to let the indigenous ones speak and be heard.

Remember that police are targeting people of color, because they know that many don't have the money to deal with court costs, so if you are white and reasonably well-off, be prepared to surround and protect people of color with your bodies. Know also that there are many support jobs in camp that do not require you to be on front lines.

Be aware that no one cares what religion you are, or even if you are an atheist. Prayer is part of life here, and it means whatever you want to make it. Good thoughts are a form of prayer.

Know that you are a part of history in the making.

Alcohol, illegal drugs and weapons are strictly forbidden at all camps. Tobacco is allowed, and in fact loose tobacco is an important part of ceremony.

**Here is the main issue:**

The oil company called Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), after splitting an eleven hundred-mile pipeline into multiple environmental assessments so that people could not assess its full impact, reacted to strenuous objections from the people of Bismarck, North Dakota by re-routing the pipeline's original crossing point, so it wouldn't threaten their water supply. DAPL re-routed it through former Sioux Nation treaty land that had been seized by the US government, sold into private ownership, and eventually sold to DAPL. The pipeline route is destroying sacred burial grounds, and is directly upstream from the water supply for the Sioux Nation and 18 million people downstream. Despite its claims to the contrary, DAPL did not consult properly in a government-to-government manner with the Sioux Nation, and is now defying requests from three federal agencies and a court order to stop construction. It is about to proceed with drilling under the Missouri River, despite no permit issued yet by the Army Corps of Engineers. It will likely begin that drilling in the coming week.

Bismarck is 90 percent white. Standing Rock is Native American. Do the math. This is a perfect example of where abuses of laws designed to protect clean water, air and land end up prioritizing *whose* environment they'll protect. Eventually you end up with a social justice issue as well as an environmental one, not to mention a mortal threat to the sovereignty of the Sioux Nation.

**Without mincing words, what we have here is the US National Guard, federal marshals, local and state police from 7 states and others acting as armed corporate security for an oil company that is willfully violating federal law. If that's too strong a statement without factual support, read this letter from the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (copy and paste the link if it doesn't click through):**

<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3036069-Ex-32-ACHP-Objection-Letter-DAPL.html>

If you read the legal documents prepared by DAPL for the purpose of obtaining a permit, it's clear they've cheated. It's also clear that the Army Corps of Engineers has allowed it. The same abuses of laws regulating environmental and cultural damage that we in the Pacific Northwest have seen in the Navy's extreme expansion of activities are also occurring at Standing Rock via the Army Corps. The same types of abuses are also contributing to the struggle of the Chamorro and Carolinian peoples in the Northern Marianas Islands, where the Navy wants to kick them off an island they've inhabited for 3,000 years so it can be used as a bombing range. The same abuses are causing anguish among Native Alaskans as their lands, waters and

livelihoods are being threatened. Deep as it is, Standing Rock is the tip of an iceberg of legal abuse, and these legal abuses threaten Tribal sovereignty as well as the environment, across the nation and beyond.

**Here is the other main issue:**

Elders of the Great Sioux Nation have instructed that all protests be done in peaceful ceremony and prayer, with no anger, foul language or non-peaceful tactics, no matter what the provocation. No. Violence. Period. Anyone who can't respect that or cannot be otherwise useful at camp should probably not come. If you bring your own agenda and ideas, be prepared to keep them to yourself, so that you can listen to and learn from these people, who've probably already thought of them.

At Standing Rock, it's about protecting the water, which is life itself. Mni wiconi is the Lakota call-and-response, which means "Water is life." It's pronounced Mini wi-CHO-nee. If you say it, say it four times, one each for the North, East, South and West.

**Route planning:**

Consider your travel route carefully. You might want to take a back road when you get nearer to the camps. Route 1806 along the Missouri River is blocked from the north at the bridge at Cannon Ball. From the north, try Rt 6 to 24, then turn north on 24 toward the camps. From the south, Rt 24 can be reached via Rt 12 and XX in South Dakota. About 7 miles south of the camp is the Tribe's Prairie Nights hotel and casino, a large well-made structure with a gas station and convenience store. All

Police on interstates are said to be using Stingray or similar technology to monitor cellphones in order to ascertain where people are going. Some vehicles bound for Standing Rock have been stopped and searched. Consider turning phones off and using paper maps on the interstate approaching Bismarck, or take a back route to Standing Rock from further out than Bismarck or Mandan. You might be able to safely turn on cellphones at motels and gas stations enroute; I'm not an expert but that's what I did. Stay below the speed limit, pay strict attention to slower speeds around small towns, make sure your vehicle taillights are working, and have your vehicle paperwork in order, to give the police no easy reason to stop or detain you. There are some roadblocks coming from the north, but I'm told they're mostly targeting traffic from the Bismarck airport, and I encountered none coming in from the south on Reservation land; however, that doesn't mean they won't be there.

**I wish I could say the following is rumor, but it's not:**

Equipment bound for Standing Rock has been confiscated by police during illegal searches, so people who are bringing badly needed wood stoves and heavy winter tents should be extra concerned and careful. Consider covering your load with blankets or tarps so contents can't be easily identified and a fake probable cause established for a search.

If you are stopped by police who ask to search your vehicle, ask if you are being detained, and also say, "Would you please articulate the probable cause?" Use the

verb articulate because this word is prominent in the statute and in case law, and the officer may recognize this word as code that you probably know your rights without your having to say so and rub his nose in it. If the police say they are going to search your vehicle anyway, you must cooperate, but first say, "I do not voluntarily give you permission to search my vehicle" before following their instructions. Do not resist or argue, as they are looking for reasons to make arrests and stop people from going to Standing Rock. Saying these things won't stop them from searching your vehicle, but they will be part of a potential court case later. The ACLU is following this closely, and you might want to read through their web pages before going. If you are filming an encounter with police and they ask you to stop, obey them unless you want to escalate things, but have someone take careful pen-and-paper notes of what's being said and done. The police may also tell you that you are being recorded, so it's important to establish your own record, and you have the right to do that.

It may be unwise to advertise that you are going to Standing Rock while driving through some areas, especially if you are carrying equipment that absolutely must get to the camps. Near the camps, convoys will be spotted by DAPL and police aircraft. A few people along the way whom I didn't have a warm feeling about asked me where I was going, and I told them I was on my way to visit an aunt and uncle in Minnesota. I know some people are meeting up enroute and celebrating the fact that they're all going to Standing Rock, but this is just a caution for you to use your own judgment, especially if traveling alone. You may get hostile glares if you stand out. I felt intimidated by a young man at a gas station who stared and stared at me in a hostile way, and later by some angry-looking police officers at a town south of camp, so I said nothing, paid and left quickly. It might have been my car (a small gas-saver) or plates, who knows. But you will also find plenty of courteous drivers and polite people all along the way.

**At camp:**

No alcohol, drugs, or weapons. A camp or pocket knife is okay, and tobacco is okay.

Bring your own water, food, source of heat, cooking stove, and propane or firewood if you need it; be self sufficient. Although there are five or six volunteer-run kitchens/mess tents at the main camp serving food, the camp needs all its own resources to get through winter, so try not to add too much to their burden. Water supply is limited, so fill up containers before you arrive.

Prepare for cold, snow, and high winds that are flattening 3-season tents. Bring extra tent stakes and tarps. It may actually be warmer sleeping in your car. Should you do that, invest in some of that foil-lined bubble wrap and cut out pieces to cover each window. It will help keep the heat in. Spread a reflective rescue blanket under and around your sleeping bag; it will reflect heat back toward you. I also covered my sleeping bag with an Army surplus woolen blanket and was warm when the temps dipped into the low twenties and high teens. It often warms up nicely in the afternoons, and you might not even need a jacket on some days—for now.

**There is more than one camp:**

The Sacred Stone Camp is on private land and is to the south of the main camp. You will see a sign on the right side of the road for it first, and they are very welcoming. There is a sub-camp off Sacred Stone, called Rosebud, which is across the river from the main camp. Be sure to ask permission of your prospective neighbors to set up camp near them. I did not stay there, so will confine my description to the main camp.

The main camp, a bit further along from Sacred Stone, is remarkable and unmistakable from the road, and just beyond its main gate the road is blocked with orange cones. The main gate is the second gate you come to; the first on the right is the exit gate. Oceti Sakowin Camp is on former Sioux Nation land now leased back from the Army Corps of Engineers, and it contains many sub-camps. It is roughly pronounced oh-CHET-ee shak-o-WEEN, and has a flag-lined main road, its own security patrol, and it borders the pipeline construction area. There are about 4,000 people camped there, from dozens of states and more than 300 indigenous nations around the world, and it is large and complex enough to require 15 minutes to walk from one end to the other. I stayed at this camp, and as an older white woman traveling alone, I felt safe, welcome and completely included. And wonderfully fascinated by all the people who were there.

There is another, very small camp, on former Sioux Nation land that is considered by police and DAPL to be a trespass camp. Several weeks ago it was bulldozed, and peoples' belongings were urinated on by oil company employees, after which they dumped the remains on Sioux land, but a new camp has been set up again. I think you'd need to check with Oceti camp leadership before trying to set up there, as all your belongings and your personal security would be at risk.

**In the Oceti camp:**

Unless you are staying for the winter, set up your campsite on the north, or river (left) side of the flag-lined main road after you enter camp. If people are camped around you, ask permission first to set up camp. You may need chains for your vehicle to get out when it snows, because the mud gets slick and the camp entrance and exit gates have short but steep inclines. Oceti Sakowin is also where the Seven Council Fire is. Near the river you will see seven tipis in a large oval field surrounding a sacred fire, which is never allowed to go out. Do not drive a car onto this field. Approach or walk around sacred fires respectfully, and in a clockwise direction. This gathering represents an historic coming together of seven divisions of Dakota, Lakota and Nakota tribal governments and communities in Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. This Council has not convened since the Battle of the Greasy Grass, called by us white people the Little Bighorn, in 1876. But this coming together was predicted long ago by Anishinaabe prophecy, which marks phases, or epochs, in the life of the people on Turtle Island, a Native American name for the North American continent. It was predicted, and here they are. The significance of it left me speechless.

A delightful young indigenous Canadian was the tender of the Seven Council Fire last week. He showed me the entrance to its circle and invited me to visit and pray anytime. I lost my church faith long ago, but I can still pray to whatever power it is that's greater than me, for good things to happen. This young man was wearing a Tibetan jacket and we talked about Tibet, of which he knows a lot. I told him a little about my visit there in 2007. I met the people at the legal tent, and spoke with dozens of people who were there to help.

I decided to sleep in my car, because it would be warmer than sleeping on the ground in a tent. Just after sunset at 4:45, a cold clear night descended rapidly, and the evening's events began. By coincidence I was camped on a line between the Seven Council Fire and the other sacred fire at the center of Oceti Sakowin camp life. After dark, a single drum began beating like a heart around the Oceti sacred fire. Soon it was joined by other drums, a voice, and then another and another, singing in Lakota, until it swelled to envelop the whole camp, and I was transported. The drumming and singing is meant to counteract the noise of the digging and drilling machines just up the hill, which an elder said "irritates the earth." When the drumming and singing stopped around 11pm, I heard drumming far off, and when it stopped, someone nearer picked up the heartbeat. The beat never faltered, and was hypnotic and protective as I fell asleep in the giant beating heart of this gathering. I'm not sure, but think perhaps the drumming might have been done by sentries, because it seemed to echo around the perimeters of the camp, one drummer at a time, a sound that said, we're watching out for everyone.

Things may feel a bit chaotic at first when you arrive at camp; just find a spot to camp and then head for the main sacred fire and loudspeaker at the camp center, where people at the volunteer information tent can help orient you. Then go walk around, there is a lot to see and learn. You will do a lot of walking. Slow down and don't be in a hurry. **And I cannot emphasize this enough:** go to an orientation session. They're at 9 am each day in the big white dome, easily visible about 200 yards from the right side of the main flag-lined road. You will need warm clothing even inside, as the green Army tent where they take newcomers after a short ceremony in the dome is still unheated as of last week, and it takes two hours to impart the information needed. It is considered impolite to leave any meeting before the final prayer is said, so visit one of the many rows of porta-pottis before you go. These are emptied daily, around 5:30 am, and for trash there is a large garbage dumpster in the middle of the flat field north of the flag road; however, if you are only staying for a few days, consider taking your own garbage back out with you.

The loudspeaker at camp center is for indigenous people, especially elders, and is a combination of info-center ("So-and-so needs a ride to New Mexico") and cultural sharing. Each evening there is something interesting happening; sometimes it's drumming and singing, and often there are stories broadcast to the entire camp. It's lovely to lay in your camp at night and hear stories, or the echoing call and response

of “Mni Wiconi!” (pronounced Mini Wi-CHO-nee,) or to hear the hoofbeats and neighs of ponies as sentries and young warriors ride past.

**Legal matters:**

Take the direct action training and sign the information sheet at the legal tent on Media Hill before participating in any protests, which are called direct actions. The training schedule and locations are posted at the Volunteer tent near the main sacred fire and loudspeaker. At the legal tent on “Media Hill,” you will be briefed and told to write the legal team’s phone number on your arm with a sharpie.

Water protectors who are merely praying are getting arrested for inciting a riot. Police are confiscating arrestees’ cellphones, personal effects, cash, etc., and for the most part are not returning them. This is illegal. On direct actions, do not carry on your person anything that could be considered a weapon, even a stick, because it will be used to escalate charges from a misdemeanor to a felony. Police are strip-searching all arrestees and putting them in orange jumpsuits and handcuffs in cold dog kennel-style cages. Arrestees can sometimes choose to get out of jail right away on bail, or to wait 3 days for arraignment, in which case costs for the legal bail fund that has been set up for this are cut in half. People are donating to this fund, and it is so far able to cover all legal and bail costs, and I also understand it has covered costs for impounded cars, but the latter is not confirmed.

If you go on direct actions, bring a pair of those clear safety goggles, earplugs, a scarf for your nose and face, and be prepared to get arrested, even if you’re only there to witness. If you are an elder, a journalist, a medic or especially a person of color, you will likely be targeted. A journalist was shot with a rubber bullet recently, and three medics were dragged out of a car that continued to roll toward a group of people, and assaulted by overzealous police.

You’ve probably seen the videos of corporate security using attack dogs, and police liberally spraying mace from large canisters on water protectors who are standing in the river shouting, “We are unarmed.” While no attack dogs were used last week, the macing and teargas are being augmented with flash grenades thrown at peoples’ feet so as to create shrapnel that injures them. Police are also using beanbag rounds as well as rubber bullets, both of which can be lethal. On Monday, a line of National Guard and federal marshals in riot gear, carrying assault rifles with real bullets, met the water protectors as they arrived in Bismarck, but the troops walked away toward the federal building when the water protectors showed once again that their intentions are peaceful. The federal troops left the police to “handle” it.

According to the training, a weak solution of apple vinegar and water sprayed on your face-covering scarf will make it easier to breathe if teargas or mace are used, and a solution of milk of magnesia diluted in water in a squirt bottle will be useful as eyewash if you get maced in the eyes. The police are aiming not just for the eyes but are spraying the entire body. Do not wear contact lenses. If you get maced wearing

contacts, it is a medical emergency; trying to remove them will tear the corneas from your eyes.

Prepare for aggressive military tactics including electronic warfare such as MRAP and LRAD vehicles, which employ microwaves and piercing, ear-damaging noise that is designed to be disorienting. Police are routinely violating peoples' constitutional rights. UN officials have recently denounced the 'inhuman' treatment of Native American water protectors.

There are also police infiltrators in camp; whenever they are found out, they are escorted out. In camp you will be photographed via drones and your data stored for identification by facial recognition software into a database.

Police are monitoring ALL social media nationwide on Standing Rock in order to track protestors. Millions of dollars have been spent by police departments across the country, on monitoring software and equipment, according to a report this week in the Washington Post.

I was quickly drawn into camp life because conversations between strangers are easy here. I met a Nez Perce man who has been working on legal issues, both with Keystone XL and DAPL (Dakota Access Pipeline). We had a good conversation. Later we smiled as we linked arms around a large prayer circle. I am not naming any names here because all communications to, from, and about Standing Rock are being monitored, and people who are named or photographed are being targeted. That's why they ask people to not take photos, and to not post them on social media because of the monitoring and use of them as evidence for increasing charges. I wish I could say that, too, is an exaggeration, but it's not.

**Harassment and chemical warfare:** From its perch on the hill above the camp, DAPL trains bright stadium lights on the camp all night every night, for no other reason than to harass people. It flies airplanes and drones over the camp every night. On my first night there (Friday, November 11) a plane began circling above the camp after midnight, using no lights, which is illegal. The airspace over the camp is a no-fly zone, but DAPL disregards this routinely. It was cold, so I huddled in my sleeping bag inside the car, listening to the plane make round after round, passing over my area about once every two minutes, for more than two hours. In the night, the drumming was there to beat the noise back. You could choose which sound to listen to. I chose drums.

Despite being in the car, my nose, eyes and throat began to burn and my lungs clogged and I began coughing up phlegm. Not fully realizing what was happening, I donned a paper facemask and stayed covered in my sleeping bag, and in the morning heard everyone else coughing up phlegm and complaining about the burning. It felt like I, a nonsmoker, had smoked 3 packs of cigarettes that night. At first I thought it might be smoke from campfires, but it wasn't. I also noticed the heavy frost on my car windshield was tinged brownish. This video report was



posted on Youtube today, November 19, 2016. What she describes is exactly what I experienced, and I recommend that you copy and paste the link if it doesn't click through, and watch this: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Z6rFRn2VTk>

A couple days later after continuous night flights, someone finally saw the plane; it was a crop duster. On November 14, the woman in the above video, Candida Rodriguez Kingbird of the Red Lake Anishinaabe and Ojibway Tribes said, "This morning at 5:30 we came out because we heard the same aircraft passing overhead; it was verified to be a crop duster, and under each wing there were two hoses which they use to spray down agriculture and poisons on top of different harvests that they're growing... This is an act of chemical warfare; this is an act of terrorism in the United States by the United States government. We're not going to stop. These resources belong to our children, this water belongs to our children, this is our future."

### **Electronic surveillance:**

There is a large semi-truck and trailer about 2 miles south of camp that is intercepting all electronic communications from camp. There is one small hill at camp called Media or Facebook Hill where a weak cell signal is available. Elsewhere in the main camp a cell signal is not available. Some FB posts are being deleted; one of my comments disappeared after it was marked "posted." Many people are noticing that cellphone batteries are draining faster than normal on the hill; mine atypically went from 88 percent to 34 percent in fifteen minutes of light use. This of course would make it hard to take videos. Some tech-savvy man mentioned Vampire malware, but my phone battery behaved just fine as long as I wasn't on the hill trying to use email or Facebook.

### **Thuggery:**

DAPL employees are engaging in thuggery. Despite protests being unarmed peaceful prayer ceremonies, the local sheriff has told local farmers and ranchers to arm themselves. On Friday an employee in a pickup drew a pistol and pointed it at several people who were trying to prevent him from driving his truck into the water protectors who were praying. As he left the area, a smartphone that had accidentally fallen onto his truck's running board was still streaming live on Facebook as he drove away, and recorded him firing 7 rounds in the air, and then calling DAPL. The Morton County police did nothing about it.

On Monday night I spoke with an elder whose name I won't reveal, from the White Mountain Apache Nation. She told me that as she and a dozen other water protectors were praying that day next to a bulldozer, two men in a pickup truck swerved off the road and tried to hit her. She jumped out of the way. The men got out and approached her; one was carrying a bat. Both men unleashed a stream of hatred and cursing, and this amazing woman just stood there in front of them, astonished at the level of hatred on their faces. She then prayed aloud: Dear Creator, please soften the hatred in the hearts of these men, I know at least one of them must be a husband and father, please take care of them and heal their hearts.

At this the venom went out of them, and they dropped their chins to their chests.

Someone in a pickup was observed setting a large grass fire at night upwind of the camp about two weeks ago, while coincidentally the drones and helicopters had stopped flying. While 9-1-1 was immediately called, no firefighting equipment showed up for seven hours; by then, the wind had changed and sent the fire away from camp. The only help to arrive was a couple of police who took interviews and left. Once the fire was no longer a danger, the drones resumed flying. A second grass fire sprang up suddenly on Sunday, about 100 yards from where I was attending training at the camp's edge, but everyone rushed to carry water and put it out. Nobody knew what caused it.

A Native American man told me about being accosted at Denver airport by two men who detained him for questioning, but refused to identify themselves. He in turn asked for a lawyer, so they were at a stalemate until a local sheriff arrived and asked them to identify themselves. They refused, and the sheriff let the man proceed. It's possible they were DAPL employees. But how did they know he was coming off the plane? The man learned that TSA had provided them with his name.

It's worth noting that not all police appear to agree with this way of treating people; according to camp sources, more than 50 have "turned in their badges" and gone home. In several communities in adjacent states, people are asking their police department to not send, or to recall, personnel.

**On November 16, the Washington Post printed a hyperbolic editorial** co-authored by the president of the lobbying firm that represents the American Petroleum Institute and the CEO of a firm representing DAPL. It labeled Native Americans and non-natives who are trying to protect their water supply "domestic terrorists," saying they are being paid to protest and that the "historic indignities visited upon Native Americans are just one more set of tools in the box of those hostile to fossil fuels." They said the issue has "become unmoored from the facts" and chastised "otherwise serious publications" for printing editorials that express their grievances. They said anyone who sympathizes with them has an "incomplete view" and that the protestors are violent and dangerous, and that it is, after all just a pipeline project of which there are many. And they claimed that the Sioux had been given "dozens of chances" to consult, but refused.

One of the sayings in circulation at the camp has unknown origins but I was told it has reappeared in a child's drawing that said, "They tried to bury us, but they didn't know we were seeds."

Sincerely and with respect,  
Karen Sullivan

**If you don't go but still want to help:**

You can still send money and supplies. The money will be used to buy supplies, firewood, winter shelter, and food. Or donate to the legal team. Copy and paste these links for more information:

<http://www.ocetisakowincamp.org>

<http://sacredstonecamp.org/supply-list/>

<https://fundrazr.com/campaigns/11B5z8>